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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000918

SIPDIS

FOR CA/VO

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI'S PROTOCOL CHIEF THREATENS SUSPENSION
U.S. DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES

11. (SBU) Summary. On September 10, Djama Elmi Darar, Chief of Presidential Protocol, accompanied by the head of presidential security, expressed and Charge d'Affaires his displeasure in not being able to procure a visa for one of the members of the security staff chosen to accompany Guelleh to UNGA. Darar threatened to halt all issuance of any diplomatic visas to Americans, refuse American duty-free imports, delay American diplomatic vehicle registrations, and hold back gasoline coupons until the visa Post's coincidental receipt of SAO clearance around the same time per issuance, but the issue may reappear in future application instances. summary.

12. (SBU) The Djiboutian Protocol Office has repeatedly delivered visas to Embassy Djibouti with the expectation of issuance in an unreasonable time frame. The last diplomatic delegation to the U.S. in May 2005 consisted of three individuals not being able to accompany the president because they were subject to SAOs, and did not bring their passports in time to receive the SAOs cleared.

13. (U) Given the history of last minute applications, Embassy Djibouti requested, beginning in June, that the government's Protocol Office submit applications for the UNGA delegation as early as possible. When the applications finally arrived at COB on Tuesday September 6, more than half were incomplete, lacked photographs or had invalid passports. We managed to issue 19 out of 20 visas, but one was delayed by the need for an SAO.

14. (U) On Saturday, September 10, a weekend, ConOff received word that the Protocol Chief wanted an immediate meeting regarding the case of the individual requiring an SAO. (Note: Although an SAO clearance had been accorded overnight, the visa still could not be immediately authorized for technical reasons, as Embassy's parser server is not normally rebooted on weekends.)

15. (SBU) In the meeting, also attended by the Charge, Darar immediately requested the visa that was still unissued. ConOff and Charge attempted to expedite processing, even for diplomatic visas, sometimes takes time, and every effort being made to expedite this particular application. Darar responded that if visas were not issued within the next hour Djibouti would cease issuing diplomatic visas for Americans, refuse any American duty-free imports, American diplomatic vehicle registrations, and hold back coupons for fuel. Charge said that the threat would need to be passed along to the President and offered Darar the chance to retract the threat. Instead he repeated the threat, and agreed that the threat should be communicated to Washington. During the course of the meeting, the parser was rebooted, so that the visa could be cleared in NIV. After Darar left, ConOff was able to authenticate the visa in question. The passport was picked up from the embassy minutes later.

16. (SBU) Comment: While the meeting itself had no impact on the timing of issuance of the outstanding visa, the fact that it was issued shortly after the conclusion of the meeting will probably confirm Darar's belief that verbal threats can facilitate matters regarding visas. We are uncertain if there is a policy for the future. We will monitor and apprise Washington of developments accordingly. End Comment

RAGSDALE